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February 22, 2012
Secretary Arne Duncan
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan, ^{Am*}

As you may know, Wisconsin State Superintendent Tony Evers submitted recently a waiver request from some elements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. I write today in support of a waiver from NCLB for Wisconsin. My office has just begun to review the nearly 700-page application and I hope to submit more specific comments about its merits at a later date.

In the last year, we have made substantial reforms to Wisconsin's education system ranging from improving the way school districts manage their finances to studying the best way to ensure every third grader can read at grade level.

We still have more work to do. That is why earlier this month I announced my support for legislation to improve our long-stagnant reading achievement and to create a fair, transparent and rigorous system for evaluating teachers and principals. These reforms are based on the hard work and collaborative efforts of teachers, researchers, advocates, legislators from both parties, and State Superintendent Tony Evers.

When I sign this education reform package into law, Wisconsin will be poised to serve as a model for the nation on how to improve student outcomes. We hope you will work with us to get to a final agreement so we can implement many of these and other reforms. Once a waiver is approved for Wisconsin, I remain committed to passing legislation that will evaluate all schools receiving public funds on an even playing field.

Wisconsin's NCLB waiver will help us build the educational foundation for success necessary to improve education and train the next generation's workforce. I specifically support a waiver because:

- For the first time we will be able to hold schools accountable for student growth, not just proficiency. This will help ensure schools are focusing on preparing students for college or a career. To achieve this goal we are especially focusing on third grade reading proficiency and graduation rates.
- Raising educational standards and rewarding student growth will be positive for students. Wisconsin will tie test proficiency levels to the NAEP, a well-respected

national test that sets much higher standards than the current test. Starting in 2014-15 students will take the new Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium test rather than the much maligned WKCE.

- A new teacher and principal evaluation system will help us evaluate what works, replicate educational success across our state and provide assistance in areas where there is need for improvement. Through a collaborative effort Wisconsin has developed a new system that will be fair and will look at how teachers (and their students) perform rather than simply looking at teacher seniority. Teachers will be rewarded, not punished, for taking on difficult assignments.
- If schools fail to succeed year after year we will be able to take corrective action to ensure all students have access to a great education.

Based on a brief initial review of the waiver, I have concerns about its disparity in treatment between public schools and schools in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. Months ago, I committed to a fair system that holds all schools receiving public funds to the same measures of accountability.

At the time, there existed a consensus among all leaders of the School Accountability Task Force, including Superintendent Evers, that this should be the case. I remain committed to that principle and am disappointed that the waiver appears to deviate from our agreement. I am hopeful that continued dialogue between my office, the Department of Public Instruction and all education stakeholders can find a solution to this disparity.

Thank you for taking the time to consider a NCLB waiver for Wisconsin. Please contact me if I can provide any additional information or be of assistance.

Sincerely,


Governor Scott Walker

Thanks for your leadership!